



## **Comparing The Planning Approaches and the Delivery of Social Justice in Mumbai Urban Transport Project and Recife Master Plan Formulation.**

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### **Abstract**

This essay compares the parallels and disparities between various planning approaches and the associated delivery of Social Justice in the 1991 Masterplan formation of Recife, Brazil and the Mumbai Urban Transport Project. It employs a lens of Social Justice through which a critique of the theoretical and practical applications of planning approaches in the two cases are made. It also heavily focuses on Social Justice in the Urban Slum, the principle commonality for which the two cases were picked.

### **Social Justice in the context of Urban Development.**

The idea of social justice broadly envisions a free and egalitarian society. It conceptualises and strives for a state of affairs in which a fair and just redistribution of resources, opportunities and privileges can take place. The term has a tendency to lend itself to arbitrary definitions and become an abstract container for a vast array of political and emotive statements. Often, the description of social justice is coloured and shaped by the very obstructions to it. [1]

The framing of Social Justice in the Context of Urban Development has to be cognisant of the variegated, yet intersectional political, economic, social and cultural injustices that are at play. Issues of poverty, colonialism, lack of democracy, gender and racial inequality directly and indirectly determine the nature of spatial justice in any given case.

Nancy Frazer's interpretation of social justice has a pertinent application in the reading of the two cases. Participatory frameworks in the interventions in Mumbai and Recife contain elements of both distributive and recognitive justice, in cities where historically impoverished and disenfranchised communities have suffered both distributive and recognitive injuries. They also reveal the intersectionality between the two elements.

### **Mumbai and Recife: A brief history.**

In comparing the planning approaches and the delivery of social justice in the specific cases of the MUTP and Recife Masterplan formulation, it is crucial to understand and read these case studies in the wider context and the history of urban planning and social justice in their respective localities.

Crucial to the comparison is the recognition of the rapid economic growth of the two cities - which is both driven by, and further reifies the notion of the developmental state within the policy formulation and urban planning institutions of each respective city, as well as nation.

Urban planning policies were also shaped by a rapidly diversifying economy. A critical part of the growth of the cities are owed to their

logistical advantage; where the availability of historic Sea Ports made them ideal candidates for investment based on commerce and tertiary sector. The idea of the 'Global City' is quite explicit in the developmental ambitions and planning of both Mumbai and Recife.

The cities share a post-colonial past. Mumbai in particular is planned to maximise the overall logistical efficiency of colonial exploitation. Urban planning institutions and policies in Mumbai are far from having achieved complete decolonisation - and still, despite of incremental improvements, largely reflect the top down, subjugating nature of their colonial founders.

Railways of Mumbai, for example are directly representative of the larger, residual effects of Colonial urban planning approaches on native populations. The strictly utilitarian nature of existing structures often leaves planners that follow - restricted room to manoeuvre, imagine, innovate or change - physically or ideologically. It is within these limitations that projects such as MUTP is designed and executed.

### **A comparison of planning interventions, their approaches, underlying logic and effects on Social Justice in Recife and Mumbai.**

#### **Rational Comprehensive Planning: Planning Approaches under Colonialism, Military Rule and Democracy.**

MUTP, from the viewpoint of the central government and Indian Railways in particular, heavily relies on the basal ideology of Rational Comprehensive planning, combined strongly with of pro-growth, entrepreneurial planning. Slums within 30 feet of the railways are seen as an obstruction to the efficiency of the railways (Patel and Sharma, 1998 ), and by extension – an impediment to the greater economic efficiency of the ambitious, global city of Mumbai. There is a legitimate, utilitarian case to be made for the removal of the slums, what is questionable, the process.

To the central government, the slum at large is an impediment to attracting foreign investment, stimulating industry and gentrifying the city to

fit the ideal vision of an urban metropolis. The cast iron, paradigmatic vision of strict geometric spatial order, which is central to the planning aspirations of the administration is unsettled by the informality and the perceived disorder of the slum. Residual effects of colonial power structures are still survived by the state-centred, post-independence paradigm of development that India has subsequently adopted.

Despite the rich and diverse economic contribution of the slum to the formal economy, and despite how the formal city, at times is serviced by the slum, the apathetic, ideologically limiting effects of the rational comprehensive planning approach of the central government perpetuate injustices, both distributive and recognitive in the slum.

At times. Strong Centrality and Paternalism undermines the local government of Maharashtra in ensuring the guarantee of even the basic amenities to the slum communities. For instance, the state government of Maharashtra is deprived of No Objection Certificates (Burra,1999) which would enable the provision of amenities to the slums in Indian Railways owned lands – the underlying logic being that the provision of amenities would legitimise the occupation of the said land by slum dwellers – the clear motive being the sustained exclusion of the urban poor from any provision of legal grounds which by extension would legitimise their demand for a greater degree of participation.

The Maharashtra government too, has a history of regular demolitions, at times – extra-legal, to no avail, given the frugal makeshift habitats tend to regenerate. (Patel and Sharma, 1998) .

Strong centrality, in combination with rational comprehensive planning can also be observed under the Military rule in Brazil (Maia, 1996), until a greater devolution of powers were facilitated through the establishment of democratic rule in the 1980's. Democracy and decentralisation, of which participation, recognition and redistribution are implicit values, were crucial in the introduction of pro-

poor, participatory planning approaches in the freshly democratised Recife.

The perception of the slum as a hindrance to development is a theme 1960's and 1970's Recife shares with Mumbai. In planning policies described as being "increasingly technocratic and elitist", "attempts to clean and redevelop the city centre" resulted in squatter communities being expelled from the inner city to the peripheries to make way for upgrades in the city infrastructure. (Maia, 1996).

The interventions that took place in Mumbai and Recife were different in their core ambitions. In Mumbai, the primary intention behind the resettlement project was the expediency of the railways. From an administrative viewpoint, the resettlement itself was merely a secondary consequence which had to be contended with. Demand for Social Justice in this context was an insurgent reaction to potential displacement and imminent distributive injuries and loss of habitat.

The city plan in Recife was premised upon a more all-encompassing, deeper societal and political ambition to induce pro-poor, inclusive, socially just changes in (and through) urban planning. It was part of a much larger socio-political upheaval, which saw urban planning as central in achieving greater socioeconomic equalities.

However, common to both cases is accumulated public discontent of historic social, economic, political and spatial injuries. The precipitation of the cumulative social costs of exclusionary rational comprehensive planning, which worsened the conditions of the poor and the marginalised spawned a civic consciousness that played an equally crucial role in both the cases discussed.

In the case of MUTP, the alliance of SPARC, NDSF, MM and the collective resistance of the slum community is the cumulative result of decades of forced evictions, maltreatment by the state, and barriers to participation (Patel, d'Cruz. Burra, 2002). Similarly, the emancipatory wing of the Roman Catholic Church, The Slum Dwellers movements, the

university academia and the multiple NGO's that clamoured for socially just planning in Recife were shaped, informed and motivated by trauma and injustices spanning for decades through colonial oppression and military rule (Maia, 1996).

### **Participatory Planning, Civil Society Actors and their fight for recognitive and distributive social justice.**

The mediating role of the NGO in articulating the demands of the citizenry and the coalescing of civil society movements to strengthen their representational powers are two strong pathways for social justice visible throughout the case studies.

The Neighbourhood Assemblies that were formed in Recife, are akin to the multiple slum dwellers associations in Mumbai, they were motivated primarily by the level of resilience and organisation required to live on informal settlements. They gradually evolved both in volume and influence – with the support of NGOs and other institutions ranging from academic to religious.

Following the new constitution in 1988 when more power was delegated to local municipalities in Brazil, and the discourse of 'Security and Development' had been replaced by 'Development with Participation', (Maia 1996) the aforementioned civil society organisations were empowered, as avenues opened up for participation. This level of democratisation is not seen generally within Indian administrative bodies to this very day, as such civil interventions in the MUTP were staged under much harsher conditions.

With regards to the MUTP, the World Bank funding which constituted over 30% of the project cost was conditional upon civil society participation in the project. (Burra, 2001) [2]

The delivery of Social Justice and true participation in the MUTP begins with the baseline surveying of the slum community. Despite the alliance of SPARC/ NSDF and

Mahila Milan being members of the MUTP task force; the World Bank insisted on its own methodology in the baseline surveys and enumeration. The alliance, asserted the right to true participation and instead insisted on deploying their own. (Patel, d’Cruz. Burra, 2002)

The alliance’s survey strategy was qualitative instead of being strictly quantitative, this meant that there was a greater cognitive quality in the data about the diverse needs, issues and the aspirations of the slum community, rather than a traditionally reductive, numerical representation.

The enumeration process also signified that the state actors were being flexible and willing to give up some of their powers, this meant that the usual asymmetry of knowledge between the state bureaucracy and the general public had now been disrupted - by extension the state actors now had to communicate, and rely upon the literature of the alliance, which meant that the legitimacy of the alliance had been cemented, and there was some degree of meaningful, concrete representative justice within the institutional arrangements.

In contrast, the shantytown dwellers committee called to Recife to participate in the city plan formation suffered from an asymmetry of information that undermined true representation. Primarily, the city took no enthusiasm in disseminating information. The occasionally shared literature was highly technical and jargon riddled, rendering them impenetrable to the already disadvantaged members. (Moura, 1996) The difference between mere presence and true participation relies not on a neutral participatory framework alone, but also on the provisions to actively mitigate the effects of existing inequalities on current fora.

A more qualitative, granular approach to gathering input through participation occurred in Recife through the reformist Mayor Jarbas Vasconcelo’s 1984 program of “prefeitura nos bairros” (City hall in the neighborhoods) where an extended channel for communication was opened up between the municipality and community actors. (Cornwall, A. Romano,

2008) This is perceived by some to have been the basis for the Participatory Budgeting program which followed, making way for even greater, more direct input and participation through relatively open forums, meetings and debates to define priorities, allocate resources and implement activities within the municipal purview. (Moura 1996)

### **Social Justice and the Urban Slum: Areas of Special Interest in Recife and the Slums of Mumbai.**

Mumbai’s relocation project, and Recife’s PREZEIS, embody two very different approaches to social justice. Participation plays a vital cognitive role in both cases, but the subsequent delivery of social justice is clearly different.

In MUTP’s case, the space that is occupied by the slum, is reclaimed - the loss of space is then compensated by distributive means, through formal ownership of new spaces, better provisions for infrastructure, healthcare and education. The primary outcome of Social Justice at the end of the project is distributive, and is supported by the recognition of the Slum population as critical part of planning discussions. The idea of the slum itself, remains an entity of disputed legal legitimacy and ownership - development is inherently seen as the dismantling of the slum, and integrating its inhabitants into the ‘formal city’.

In case of PREZEIS, the Mocambo itself is recognised and formalised as a protected social and geographical entity. Land Management instruments are introduced to thwart speculative land prices, and residents are provided the legal rights to the land they occupy, while special healthcare, education and infrastructure development schemes are deployed to alleviate the issues of poverty and inequality. (Acioly, 2004) This may raise a potential long-term distributive injury, where legally cementing the identity of a slum, whilst protecting the habitat of its occupants, might actually reify the idea of a socially and culturally fractured city, therefore perpetuating and normalising inequalities between the slum and the paradigmatic ‘city proper’.

## Conclusion

One has to deploy a more fine-tuned, context specific, granular definition of Social Justice in order to better engage with the specific vulnerabilities and ambitions of the slum community. While the buzzwords of democracy, equity and diversity are all true and valid in the general application of social justice, these individual concepts too, must be rediscovered in the context of the urban slum.

Slum itself is a loaded term. The universal idea of a slum invokes visual imagery of poverty, disarray and squalor. A slum from the outside, then becomes a problem to be solved. Thus the underlying conditions that lead to the slum, are reinserted into the totality of the slum, whereupon the superficial removal of the slum, or the ordered reconstruction of the slum (usually in a vertical arrangement) is myopically perceived as a solution.

To avoid this, and instead promote truly inclusive and socially just planning strategies, one should understand the implicit rules of social strata, community relationships, social stratifications and the political economy of a slum which is peculiar to the mainstream life in the city due to their long-term exclusion from formal economic and legal structures – and this understanding can only come from meaningful participation, and in both Mumbai and Recife, meaningful participation is constantly fought for, over decades of oppressive, autocratic planning approaches.

The participation process in Recife, albeit challenges, displays a greater degree of democratisation across time than Mumbai. Despite the relatively socially just nature of MUTP, Mumbai as a city, trails behind Recife in terms of a participatory framework for urban planning and the protection of slum dwellers. While it is evident that both recognitive and distributive aspects of social justice were catered to in both projects to some degree – the more pressing observation has to be the pendulous nature of planning approaches, and the constant organisation and vigilance required by citizens to uphold the incremental victories that they have claimed in past battles.

## Appendices

[1] For example, those who reside at the base of the economic pyramid might perceive social justice through the lens of economic mobility and redistribution. A more granular observation of the said population might also reveal that economic injustices are perpetuated by a democratic deficit, as well as societal issues of racial segregation, patriarchy, caste and class. No issue is self-contained, injustices predicate themselves upon other, deeper injustices – as well as explicitly and implicitly contributing to the perpetuation of each other.

[2] What drove the World Bank to impose such a stipulation is largely, and particularly was the learning outcome of the overwhelming public backlash it received for its assistance in the controversial Narmada Dam and Irrigation project (from which it subsequently withdrew). NGOs, both local and foreign, grassroots movements and environmental activists staged protests critical of the Social and Environmental injustices the project entailed. It is important that these historic battles for human and environmental rights are mentioned, in appreciation of the legacies and the learning they had made available to subsequent movements and actors, and also the strong messages they had sent to the political classes, asserting that the traditional, elitist planning strategies were no longer sustainable.



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